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FB 63

30 June 1969

MEMORANDUM

TO: General Maxwell D. Taylor  
FROM: Dr. Laurence J. Legere *W*  
SUBJECT: The Middle of 1961

Still digging through foot lockers, I have come across some widely scattered notes I jotted down between July and December 1961. Much of what I wrote was self-conscious, overly emotional, and "underly" literary, but you may be interested in how your Berlin/NATO man perceived certain matters at the time. (Attached).

*The Middle of 1961*  
*Adv.*  
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3 July 1961

Technically this is General Taylor's third day of active duty as Military Representative of the President. Actually he has been working at it for a week, although the physical move from Pentagon to White House does not occur until Wednesday or Thursday. His terms of reference establish that he is an adviser to the President, having no command functions and not being interposed between the President and any Departmental or agency executive subordinates. This is all said and written easily enough, but there are obviously many suspicious persons around town who fear that Taylor's position will operate to undercut them or their authority somehow. God alone knows what future developments may bring to pass, but as of this writing he certainly intends to tread softly; for example, despite the ticklish relationship between his job as directed by the President and the job of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as statutory "principal military advisers" of the President (plus the Secretary of Defense and the National Security Council), he hopes to use his influence to keep open the direct channel between the JCS professionals and the President.

As might be expected, he has been trying to find out where he is going to mesh organizationally with the rest of the White House staff. This task is proving nearly impossible, because the rest of the White House "staff" seems really to be an agglomeration of six to a dozen hearty individuals picking up balls *ad libitum* and running with them as the President or McGeorge Bundy directs. This is not to deprecate what goes on, but it is manifestly 180° removed from the tightly, perhaps over-rigidly, organized system of the Eisenhower Administration. As I wrote in my National War College IRP (and the Army article derived from it), "the military are going to have to stay flexible for a while." Quite so, but the military do not like it. They are unhappy with what strikes them as a helter-skelter intellectual parlor game using the elements of national-power-in-crisis as counters. From junior officers through the highest ranks, those who are applauding Taylor's appointment are doing so because they hope he can "straighten those birds out." Unfortunately it seems to me that he is going to have to fly as one of the President's flock, at least for a while, if he is going to survive. He is not directed by the President to reform the operations of the Executive Branch at top level; he is directed to serve as the President's military right arm.

30 July 1961

July 1961 will surely be remembered as the month the United States decided to increase its defense effort, with emphasis on so-called conventional forces, particularly the Army.

The Berlin situation furnished the occasion, which is to say Khrushchev's announced intention to conclude a peace treaty with East

Germany, with the implication that the Berlin rights of the Allies would end, since they depend on the Soviet Union as the fourth party to the wartime and post-war quadripartite agreements pertaining to Berlin.

The big flapping at White House level eased off somewhat after the President's climactic speech to the nation on Tuesday evening last, July 25th. I think it is fair to say that the single most powerful influence on the President was the Acheson Report, submitted in preliminary form at the end of June after over two months in the mill. Acheson, a strong man with very hard views on firmness in the NATO context, was one man around this town who knew exactly what he wanted to see happen in the way of U.S. Policy toward NATO and Berlin. With the Administration just beginning to take hold, Acheson's hard-nosed policy tended to sweep everything and everyone before it. In fact, toward the end of the agonizing over policy, it became necessary to stake out arbitrarily a hypothetical approach at the pro-negotiation end of the spectrum and to invite adherence. In short, to oppose Acheson almost got to the point of smacking of appeasement.

I personally felt that from the beginning the President was not going to go as far as Acheson and Defense were recommending in the way of partial mobilization and declaration of national emergency. I think Taylor felt the same way; in fact he was primarily responsible in about mid-month for suggesting that four courses of action be spelled out with pros and cons, to assist decision.

Because Acheson prevailed in such a board-clearing manner, the action sequels to his report were largely by Defense; in effect, State had been earlier bypassed out of the problem to a considerable extent. One result of this has been that State has simply not come up with any negotiation alternative policies and approaches, although Kohler and Co. have been talking to the British and French in Paris for five days now, and Secretary Rusk himself flies over on Wednesday. This can only mean dusting off the old Eden-Plan-Plus position that we have hewed to since 1954.

Reston of the Times knows or senses this. In his column today he ticks off the names of a half-dozen-odd men whose experience in German affairs should qualify them to assist in the development of our diplomatic position now; McCloy, Clay, Taylor, Lovett, Murphy, among others.

2 August 1961

Today I met the President. In mid-morning General Taylor dictated a memo on Berlin, addressed to the President and designed to clarify some of the confusion surrounding distinctions between civilian airlift and garrison airlift and between small-scale ground probes and more extensive ground action. At about ten-thirty Kay Conley walked the draft into my office and said that General Taylor wanted me to go over it. No hurry indicated.

I had been working on it for about fifteen minutes when Taylor came charging in. The President had just sent for him, and he was

ready to take the memo with him if it was in fair shape. I told him there was one serious gap in logic which required an additional sentence, so off he went without it.

Ten minutes later the memo was all typed up in final form. Thinking that perhaps he was being kept waiting a few minutes outside the President's office, I walked over with the paper. He was already alone with the President when I arrived in Kenny O'Donnell's office. I told O'Donnell that Taylor would have carried the memo with him if it had been ready, and asked if he thought it would be all right if he took it in.

With a casual sweep of his arm, O'Donnell motioned me to the door and told me to walk it in myself. There they were, all alone: Taylor and the President of the United States. When I handed the paper to Taylor, he passed the original to the President and then introduced me, accenting my jumpmaster job and wound on D-Day, and mentioning that I had done graduate work at Harvard after the war. The President asked me about the wound and wanted to know if I had read The Longest Day (I had). So there it is.

17 August 1961

Last Sunday the East Germans, backed up by the Soviets, in effect closed the border between the Eastern sector and the Western sectors of Berlin. The readiest explanation for the action is the one I accept: the DDR could no longer tolerate the massive exodus of refugees. Some analysts, as their reasoning appears in cables from certain European capitals, profess to see the move as the "first slice of salami" in a deliberate campaign to gradually close in more and more until the Allies get out of Berlin and the Western part of the city is absorbed in the DDR.

Meanwhile, U.S. and inter-Allied planning on the larger Berlin problem continues. The emphasis on flexibility in the military field finds the military echelons in the Pentagon largely unable to adjust to it. Yesterday a proposed JCS set of instructions to interallied military planners reached our office via Henry Owen of State (boot-legged); they were an affront to any reader with the slightest respect for plain logic. Today Nitze and his people in ISA modified it into an admirable product. "Modified" is incorrect; they actually must have thrown away the JCS draft, which was all it deserved.

20 August 1961 (Sunday)

About last Tuesday, the first suggestions for a symbolic reinforcement of the Western garrison in Berlin began to be heard. State cables requesting reactions from key posts resulted in a high proportion of favorable replies, and by Friday the question was starkly on the table. We very wisely chose to tell the British, French, and Germans that we were going to do it unless they had strong objections, and would they please get on the horn immediately? This approach from Kohler to the Ambassadors late Friday morning.

By Friday noon the Pentagon was definitely on top of the picture, but the proposal was still being very closely held. I was in General Wheeler's office shortly after noon when he reached General Bruce Clarke in Heidelberg by telephone, and still the selected unit--the 1st Battle Group, 18th Infantry, at Mannheim, had not been alerted.

At about 2:00 p.m. General Taylor went to General Lemnitzer's office, I tagging along, and listened to some Berlin experts from the Joint Staff. At 6:00 p.m. the big meeting occurred in the White House: the President, Rusk, Kohler, Bundy, Rostow, Taylor, and perhaps Allen Dulles. By 8:00 p.m. Salinger had issued the first announcement.

Saturday the battle group moved by truck from Mannheim to near Braunschweig, and at about 6:00 a.m. Sunday local time (1:00 a.m. in Washington) was due to present itself at the Helmstedt-Marienborn check points at the western entry onto the Autobahn. I spent the hours from 9:30 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. in the White House situation room with the duty officer, just the two of us reading the news tickers and receiving telephone messages via the secure telephone direct line to the JCS Joint War Room.

A little after 3:00 a.m. I drove home, since it was apparent there was going to be no trouble. Through the whole evening, and again this morning when the convoy was enroute, I had the feeling that very few persons outside the Berlin experts in Washington realized that, if the Soviets were looking for trouble, tension, or war, they would be hard put to drum up a better chance for themselves than by playing hob in one way or another with that column.

As it is, the decision to send them in is accepted as having been a propaganda or morale-raising decision, rather routine in fact. If, however, it had proved to be the decision that led to the beginning of hostilities, even outright war, the decision would have come in for some merciless post-mortems. In that case, much would have been made of the facts (a) that the NSC was not used again (b) that Defense was not even represented at the key meeting Friday evening, neither by the Secretary nor by any one or more of the Joint Chiefs (c) that CIA was (as I think) not represented nor asked for a flash answer on the question of anticipated Soviet response. Luked out once more, but if we hadn't the same reporters who were beefing about the slowness of our reaction on Meet the Press tonight would have crucified the principals who made the decision for not having been sufficiently deliberate just in order to gain a few psychological points.

1 September 1961

Since I last wrote in here the Sovs/DDR have reduced the sector-sector crossing points in Berlin to four for West Berliners, two for West Germans, and one--Friedrich-strasse--for all foreigners, including the U.S. U.K., and French. This happened on August 23rd. As of the moment, the latest flap is over potential Sov/DDR denial of or interference with civil air access to Berlin through the corridors. And, in a more general context, the Soviets announced the night before last that they were resuming nuclear testing. So much for l'ambrance.

These events of the past two or three weeks have caused much activity in the field of contingency planning, although at first it was hit or miss. About a week ago, Taylor had Major Bill Smith and me draw up in chart form a listing of major contingencies, with the status of planning entered opposite each contingency. It did not look very encouraging.

Hence a few days ago the President, at Taylor's behest, called a meeting of the Steering Group to consider four contingencies chosen out of our list: interference with our access, intra-Berlin trouble due to the internal partition, East German revolt, and the status of tripartite-quadruplicate planning on action to be taken in case ground access is blocked.

So far almost all the attention has been directed at the air access business, because of Khrushchev's statement of about ten days ago concerning "revanchist" abuse of air travel in the corridors, and because of miscellaneous other indicators which point to possible trouble on this score.

In this study of contingency action on air access, the same misdirection of planning has occurred as on the earlier-one week to ten days' ago--flapping on ground access. In both cases we have carried into a tripartite or quadruplicate arena a position not cleared by or even checked for information to, the Steering Group level--i.e., to the President and his principal advisers. By the time the President has heard about it, the position has already been compromised in order to secure U.K., French, and/or German agreement. I suspect the U.K., French, and Germans feel absolutely free to take pot shots at what they know to be a working-level U.S. paper; if the paper carried the steam of high-level, even Presidential approval, they might not react quite so vigorously negatively.

I am reminded of the one time we have operated differently. When, on Friday August 18th, the President decided to order the U.S. battle group into Berlin, Kohler so informed the British, French, and German ambassadors at about midday, or even early afternoon, telling them that if their governments had strong objections, we would like to be so informed by about four o'clock.

I have written enough for one entry. Before knocking it off, I should note that the announcement concerning the first Soviet nuclear explosion was made at about four this afternoon. Ten minutes earlier I had seen Mr. Arthur Dean and Mr. John J. McCloy huddled near the guard desk and water fountain at the west entrance to the White House west wing. Ten minutes after that, when the announcement was handed to me in General Taylor's outer office, I was chatting with his next visitor: Dr. Edward Teller. How appropriate.

3 September 1961 (Sunday evening)

It is now, and has been for several days, public knowledge that on September 14th the foreign ministers of the U.S., U.K., France, and the Federal Republic will meet here in Washington. It is semi-public knowledge that beginning in two or three days their West

European Assistant-Secretary-level representatives will begin meeting: Foy Kohler for us, Laloy for France, Shuckburgh for the U.K., and Carstens for the FFG. Parallel to all this is a semi-acknowledged initiative planned for the opening of the UNGA on September 19th or thereabouts: Rusk to Gromyko. And, finally, in the meantime the very able Llewellyn Thompson, Ambassador to Moscow, will be sending out feelers there as his judgment dictates.

Pourquoi, Warum, and Porque?  
Negotiations.

So far as I know, this government has no position, even partially agreed, on negotiations or for use during negotiations. There is not even agreement on resurrection of our 1959 "Peace Plan," although I suppose that, faute de mieux, that will be our basic position.

A month or six weeks ago, there came into very informal being a tightly knit and extremely closely restricted group of Presidential advisers on the negotiations question. If the reason for the restricted group and the secrecy was to permit the President to consider various broad alternatives free from the pressures of formal machinery and inevitable leaks, the operation has to be classed as a failure. There have been no leaks because there has been nothing to leak. No formal machinery has inhibited imaginative thinking because there has been no formal machinery. And, finally, the President has not been exposed, as of this writing, to strong alternative views on what our position should be.

Yet everyone's heart is surely in the right place. There is no villainy abroad, only a lack of orderly thinking directed to the President's interest. For all the carping that was directed against Eisenhower's predilection for canned, "staffed-out," agreed recommendations, the advisers of this President, however unwittingly, have placed him in the same position, or at least a parallel position. Eisenhower never faced up to what Senator Jackson calls the "gales of controversy" because he explicitly didn't want to do so and had so arranged the machinery of government; Kennedy is not being permitted to face up to them because his closest advisers cannot decide whether they should act as advocates or moderates. The result is that the President has the benefit of neither sharp advocacy nor impersonal moderating. Thus the man who wanted to be a strong and decisive President is being prevented from becoming one. His every instinct is right, it seems to me, but what he needs badly are advisers who leave the field of instinct and intuition to him, while they grub away at the dirty work of preparing for his judgment the best-balanced presentation of the issues they can manage.

22 November 1961 (Wednesday)

Chancellor Adenauer arrived in town Sunday evening with a sizeable German delegation which included Defense Minister Strauss and the new foreign minister, Schroder. Yesterday at 4:00 p.m. in the Cabinet Room a sharply restricted group of U.S. officials met with those three

Germans to listen to a Defense-CIA military briefing directed particularly at known misgivings which the Germans have been expressing in various forums. Of course the Germans didn't dash up to the front of the church to give testimony, but over the next few weeks the effort may pay off. Parallel efforts directed at Macmillan and DeGaulle were on the track a month ago, but have become lost in the shuffle. If they get resurrected, I shouldn't be surprised if General Taylor and Dean Acheson were sent to London and Paris as personal representatives of the President to deliver the letters or present the briefings, as the case might be.

Henry Kissinger has quit, the first New Frontiersman on even consultant status to do so. He and I chatted for about an hour this morning. He is not planning to rush into print, but I would guess that before 1962 is very old anyone who can read will be able to figure out for himself why Henry has left. On a broad canvas that will only be taking shape a few years from now, Henry is most pessimistic about post-Adenauer Germany, post-DeGaulle France, and even post-Franco Iberia: nothing but trouble for the Alliance ahead as he sees it. The U.K. he tends to write off already.

Had lunch today with Cy Weiss of State and Dee Armstrong of Defense, both active and influential top-flight working-level officers in the NATO business. They feel that General Norstad remains basically opposed to the "graduated-response" defense concept which this Administration has adopted for the NATO area, especially in a context of increasing crisis over Berlin. They may be right, but they will have a hell of a hard time, in my opinion, proving it to their more detached bosses; Norstad's latest paper is almost foolproof in covering all bets, or "all things to all men."

23 November 1961 (Thursday)

In my opinion the school that is now carrying the most weight with the President is wrong on two important counts; I call them the Stability Fallacy and the Force Fallacy.

These individuals and their kept-men among the top names in journalism have begun panting after the Great Vision of an Atlantic Community, as though they had invented it. This allegedly positive, forward-looking goal causes the problems of Berlin and Germany to shrink to the level of minor irritants. Hence we, our Allies, the Soviets, and their Allies will work out some mutually satisfactory stable solution, and everyone will go about his more important business. The trouble with such wishful thinking is that the Soviets contempt stability, and always have. The members of this school are not the Cliveden Set of 1961, ready to accept Munichs because they think the villain is at last sated; they are, rather, like the Americans at Yalta-ready once again to believe that the Soviets will carry out the terms of agreements to which they subscribe formally.

The Force Fallacy may or may not be based on honest failure to understand. To those ensnared by it, any proposal which contemplates

the threat or use of force, however limited and subtle, must be addressed to the last-ditch protection of an agreed "vital interest." In the case of Berlin, these are: (1) continued Western military forces in West Berlin; (2) freedom and viability (?) of West Berlin; and (3) freedom of access to and from West Berlin. This approach, of course, leaves us helpless in the face of any Soviet/GDR challenge that does not directly impinge on one of those vital interests. Despite all their talk about limited force and graduated response, these men are trapped by the all-or-nothing dilemma just as surely as they accused the last Administration of being trapped, because they are literally afraid to use force of any kind except in defense of a vital interest which would warrant going to general thermonuclear war if necessary. This is flexibility?

30 November 1961

I suppose the newspapers are rather close to the facts in their interpretations of what has prompted the State Department-White House shuffle that occurred this week. Walt Rostow goes to Policy Planning in State, which is where he was supposed to have headed last January. Carl Kaysen replaces him as Bundy's deputy; hence another economist. Dick Goodwin, whom I hardly know, also goes to State to be Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs, or "American Regional Affairs," as I think it is called. These and the other shifts will, it seems to me, help in two solid ways: (1) they will move into the Department men who have the feel of what the President wants (2) they will make those men responsible for an ordered and orderly outcome of their proposals.